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Nussbaum, ANGER AND FORGIVENESS: RESENTMENT, GENEROSITY, JUSTICE

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DeYoung is clearly master of her material, combining clarity, solid scholarship, and much wisdom, though she wears it lightly, befitting one who has learned from what she has written. She has succeeded at a difficult task; to write a book that is accessible to intelligent lay readers, as well as offering fresh perspectives for those widely read in the virtue tradition. As Aristotle wrote in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “Our present discussion does not aim, as our others do, at study; for the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us” (Book II, Chapter 2, 30; Irwin translation, Hackett, 1999). DeYoung’s *Vainglory* is rich in theoretical insight, but never loses sight of virtue’s ultimate purpose for Christians: to become good.

Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice, by Martha Nussbaum. Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 315. \$24.95 (hardcover).

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The overarching aim of an academic publication is to contribute to an ongoing conversation in a way that advances the discussion, moving it toward a better understanding of the subject in question. Measured against this standard, Nussbaum’s *Anger and Forgiveness* is a success. It is thoughtful, articulate, and built on decades of research in ancient philosophy and theories of emotion. It will be especially welcome for undergraduates and those outside academia who are thinking philosophically about anger or forgiveness for the first time. The book is sprinkled with engaging stories drawn from literature, history, and personal life that illustrate the arguments she develops and will provide students numerous opportunities to see how her theme connects with their daily lives.

However, those already familiar with the philosophical, psychological, or theological literature on anger or forgiveness will find the book less rewarding. It has the drawbacks associated with being a latecomer to a conversation who has not heard most of what has gone before. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say it has the qualities of a work by someone who made important contributions to the conversation at some time in the past but then wandered into the next room for a while and hasn’t been brought up to speed on what was said in her absence.

Building on the cognitive theory of the emotions that she defended in *Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), Nussbaum presents an account of anger that focuses on the beliefs and appraisals involved in being angry. This is not to say that anger is wholly constituted



by its cognitive content. It also involves bodily changes and (often) subjective feelings (16, 251–253). But she is primarily interested in anger's cognitive content. She argues that anger is defined by the belief that something within one's circle of concern has been wrongfully harmed and the desire to strike back at the agent one takes to be responsible for the harm (18, 22). To this extent, the account is consistent with her earlier discussions of anger (see *The Therapy of Desire* [Princeton University Press, 1994], 414–415). The striking shift in *Anger and Forgiveness* has to do with Nussbaum's position on the normative status of anger. Whereas previously she argued, "Anger is a reasonable *type* of emotion to have," (*Hiding from Humanity* [Princeton University Press, 2004], 13–14)—indeed, an emotion that in many circumstances a clear-eyed, self-respecting person ought to have—now she contends that "anger is always normatively problematic" (5).

We ought not be angry, she argues, because anger is built on false beliefs, objectionable concerns, or both. The desire to lash out at the wrongdoer, which she calls "the road of payback," involves "magical thinking." It would make sense if there were a cosmic balance that could be put to rights through the suffering of the wrongdoer or if his suffering would repair the damage inflicted on the one harmed. But there is no cosmic balance and the perpetrator's suffering seldom removes or repairs the victim's suffering (24). The notable exception is if what the victim suffers as a result of the wrong is a reduction in her relative status. Through his wrongdoing the perpetrator may appear stronger and more important while the victim appears weaker and less important. Retaliating can reverse this impression, elevating the status of the former victim relative to that of the former perpetrator. Conceived in this way, which Nussbaum calls the "road of status," anger is strategically rational. Nevertheless, it remains normatively objectionable: "[T]he tendency to see everything that happens as about oneself and one's own rank seems very narcissistic, and ill suited to a society in which reciprocity and justice are important values" (28). Alternatively, one could give up anger and instead adopt an attitude oriented toward "personal and social welfare," which is both more rational and less objectionable than either the road of payback or the road of status (31). She calls the move to this third perspective "the Transition" from anger to something more productive.

Much of the aim of the book is to encourage the reader to eschew backward-looking anger and make the transition to a healthier, forward-looking attitude. Given the book's title, one might expect Nussbaum to argue that the ideal way to do this would be to forgive the wrongdoer. However, on Nussbaum's analysis forgiveness has problems of its own. Tracing the concept of forgiveness back to early Jewish and Christian sources, Nussbaum identifies two conceptions which she calls "transactional" and "unconditional" forgiveness. In transactional forgiveness the wrongdoer makes himself eligible for forgiveness by coming to the wronged party, regretfully acknowledging his fault, committing himself to not repeating this transgression, making restitution, and asking for

forgiveness. He may also need to express "a sense of [his] lowness and essential worthlessness." Only then does the victim decide to "forego anger" and "become more favorably inclined toward him" (63, 73). In unconditional forgiveness, by contrast, the victim decides to forego anger without requiring the wrongdoer to be penitent first. The shortcoming of transactional forgiveness, Nussbaum argues, is that it shares one or both of the faulty assumptions of anger, namely, that the cosmic balance can be restored through the suffering of the perpetrator or that what really matters is the victim's and perpetrator's relative status (which is set to rights as the perpetrator lowers himself in rituals of repentance and elevates his former victim by requesting her forgiveness). Unconditional forgiveness is likewise problematic insofar as it presupposes that the victim was angry to begin with—which is already to get off on the wrong foot—and it "remains backward-looking and not Transitional. It says nothing about constructing a productive future" (76). It also "often retains a whiff of moral superiority" (141).

Nussbaum's preferred alternatives are what she calls "Transition-Anger," gentleness, disappointment or grief, a love that silences anger (in intimate relationships), and a well-anchored commitment to impartial justice and public welfare (in political and institutional contexts) (84–85, 173). Transition-Anger is different from anger-proper insofar as it lacks the desire to return hurt for hurt. "[W]hile it acknowledges the wrong, it then moves forward. Its entire cognitive content is, 'How outrageous. That should not happen again'" (93). The gentle person is "not vengeful," but is "typically undisturbed" by others' transgressions—especially in the realm of relationships with "strangers, business associates, employers and employees, casual acquaintances" and other non-intimates—and is "inclined to sympathetic understanding" (53, 138). When someone causes serious harm to something within her circle of concern she may respond with grief (105). But grief, like gentleness and transition-anger, does not channel one's own suffering into a desire to inflict suffering on another. And like them it is consistent with an unwaveringly loving and generous orientation.

There is much to like in *Anger and Forgiveness*, including the attention Nussbaum draws to the contribution that feelings of helplessness make toward our propensity to become angry. This is a dimension of anger that has not been adequately appreciated in the philosophical literature on anger and forgiveness. However, there are also a number of places where readers might resist Nussbaum's analysis of anger and forgiveness and the role they should play in personal and political life.

The principal difficulty for Nussbaum's argument against anger is that it seems to depend upon a false alternative: Either one is (exclusively) interested in payback, or one is (exclusively) interested in status, or one is (exclusively) interested in future welfare. But nothing in the argument rules out the possibility that the angry person might be interested in all three. The fact that one is interested in one's own status does not entail

that one is *only* interested in status or that one thinks one's status is the most important thing at stake whenever something one cares about has been wrongfully harmed. So it is not clear that what she calls the road of status—an anger that is rooted in one's concern for one's standing vis-à-vis the wrongdoer—invariably leads to narcissism. Nor need the desire to pay back the perpetrator be built on the belief that doing so will balance the cosmic scales or mend the harm one has already suffered. Indeed, it is not clear that the desire need be explained in terms of any belief at all (aside from the belief that someone or something that matters has been wrongfully harmed). It may be that the rationality of the desire (and of the emotion more generally) is explained by a property possessed by the desiderative (or emotional) propensity as a whole rather than by every instance of the desire (or emotion). Anger's desire to strike back may be a quick and efficient way to signal one's opposition to being treated in this way, it may motivate one to risk confrontation, and it may deter those who might be tempted to encroach on one's sphere of concern. Nussbaum argues that the morally mature can cultivate better ways of achieving these ends, and I agree. But nothing in her argument shows that anger might not be the most effective means available to the less mature to achieve these ends. And if that is the case, then the retaliatory impulse of anger may be justified by the effectiveness of the practice as a whole when compared to the effectiveness of any other response system available to the less morally mature.

The argument against taking forgiveness to be a virtue is similarly problematic. It fails to engage with most of those who argue that forgiveness is a virtue. Since their views differ from those of the historic accounts she criticizes, and since she has done nothing to show that the problems with the historic accounts persist in the accounts of Downie, Roberts, Garrard and McNaughton, Holmgren, Murphy, and others, she has not yet provided any of them with a reason to prefer her position to theirs (Robin Downie, "Forgiveness," *Philosophical Quarterly* 15 [1965]; Robert Roberts, "Forgivingness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 [1995]; Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, *Forgiveness* [Acumen, 2010]; Margaret Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution* [Cambridge University Press, 2012]; Jeffrie Murphy, *Punishment and the Moral Emotions* [Oxford University Press, 2012]). The closest she comes are some remarks cautioning against calling every good thing the victim does in the wake of a wrongful harm "forgiveness" (59). To avoid simply assuming "forgiveness" is a term of approbation, she does not turn her hand to the conceptual project of mapping the contours of forgiveness and distinguishing it (on conceptual grounds) from other emotions, practices, or dispositions with which it is often confused (as she does in the case of anger). Rather, she turns to the historical project of explicating past conceptions of forgiveness reflected in Jewish and Christian religious practices. But, not surprisingly, she finds that the historical record is similarly untidy. In addition to practices that fit the profiles of what she calls transactional and unconditional forgiveness,

she also finds a strand that does not emphasize a penitential transaction or the effortful overcoming of prior anger. Rather, it is focused on being gracious, generous, or loving. In spite of the fact that this strand has been associated with forgiveness for centuries, she dismisses it as not really being about forgiveness. Instead, she suggests, it is about generosity. For this move to be persuasive, one would need to show that being gracious and being forgiving are neither a) overlapping concepts nor b) intertwined activities. And since treating them as overlapping and intertwined is both a longstanding part of the Christian tradition and well represented in the current philosophical literature, such a case would require rather extensive development—which Nussbaum fails to give it.

Since the arguments of the book's later chapters depend upon the accounts of forgiveness and anger offered in the opening chapters, the abovementioned concerns leave two sizeable holes in the foundation of the book's central argument. For all I have said, it might well be possible to fill them, but as of yet, Nussbaum has not shown how it might be done.

In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay, by Timothy Pawl. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology. Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 272. £65.00.

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Can a person possess a divine nature and a human nature, given that inconsistent predicates are true of both? This is the “Fundamental Problem” addressed by Pawl as he attempts to defend the philosophical coherence of the Christology put forward by the first seven ecumenical councils of Christendom. He limits the scope of his book to considering objections that are philosophical in nature, stating that he will not consider objections to Conciliar Christology from Biblical exegesis or from purely historical grounds (5).

After meticulously going through the contents of Conciliar Christology in chapter 1, Pawl lays out six necessary conditions for a viable metaphysical model of the incarnation given Conciliar Christology (48–50). Pawl goes on to flesh out a metaphysical model, providing a helpful diagram (62) and summary (64), and making a number of helpful clarifications such as why a concrete (rather than abstract) view of natures should be preferred and why the term “predication” should be preferred to “properties” (77–78).

From chapter 4 onwards Pawl provides a detailed explication of the Fundamental Problem, comprehensively listing ten possible responses

